

Update: Water shortage at Vioolsdrift Port of Entry

As members were made aware in a previous *Informus*, Vioolsdrift Port of Entry has been operational throughout the COVID-19 lockdown, ensuring 24-hour service delivery, which includes the Department of Health, Home Affairs, Agriculture, SAPS and SARS. The PSA also previously highlighted several shortcomings relating to water interruptions and COVID-19 non-compliance to be addressed by the employers and Port Management Control (PMC).

It has further been established that the following shortcomings, duly raised with the PMC, have not been facilitated to reach resolution for full OHS compliance and worker safety:

- Fire extinguishers expired in May 2020 and were only serviced recently.
- Lights in admin building and accommodation for single and married quarters have been dysfunctional since April 2020.
- Leaking toilets and geysers posing health risk to employees.
- Dysfunctional geysers at some rooms create difficulty and discomfort for officials working shifts.
- In the main building geysers are dysfunctional and no hot water is available.
- Air conditioners at the Single Quarters are not serviced and adjusted for COVID-19 compliance.
- Water coolers for Married Quarters were last serviced in April 2020 and are not COVID-19 compliant in terms of adequate ventilation.
- Public bathrooms and toilet are not cleaned owing to a lack of cleaners at the Port of Entry.
- No cleaning material available for the public area, resulting in travelers being exposed to unsanitised areas since April 2020.
- Public toilets have not had toilet paper since April 2020, leaving travelers with a serious health dilemma.
- The temporary Contract with Campro General Trading Company, which supplies and services the water provisions, including sewerage for the entire Port of Entry including other ports, ended on 31 August 2020.
- Water spillage streaming into Block A of living quarters has not been addressed, creating discomfort for employees and structural damage to government property.
- Inadequate lighting at front gates, which poses a risk to officials during night shifts.
- Lack of appointed cleaners creating a safety hazard in terms of COVID-19.
- Waste bins for used PPE not available in offices.

The PSA called for swift action from authorities, especially in the establishment of an OHS Committee considering deficiencies holistically. As before, the PSA's requests were ignored. The Department of Employment and Labour in the Northern Cape was requested to dispatch an OHS inspector urgently and on 29 October 2020 the Inspector indeed indicated the lack of compliance and issued a Direction/Contravention Notice for Compliance within 60 days (copy of notice available at the PSA Provincial Office in Kimberley).

The water challenges have again surfaced, and the entire Port of Entry is without water. Unfortunately, no solution is in place mainly owing to a lack of responses from the powers that be. The PSA wrote a letter to Home Affairs authorities based on complaints from members but no response was received.

Noting the directives from the World Health Organisation, DPSA Guidelines and Regulations and the Department of Health it becomes imperative that in the curbing of the spread of the virus regular washing of hands and cleaning of offices and ablution facilities are cardinal. Further failure by the Port Management Control and the authorities responsible for all Departments at this Port of Entry will result in the PSA advising members to refuse to work in unsafe buildings, which in turn means a closure of the Vioolsdrift Port of Entry. The findings of the inspection will be published by way of a follow-up *Informus*.

For more information, members can contact the PSA Provincial Office on (053) 839 1000.

GENERAL MANAGER